

The Communist Party of America (1919 — 1946)

The "old CPA" was the organization formed primarily by the Language

Federations suspended by the Socialist Party of America during the faction fight of the summer of 1919 as well as those who had given up on the strategy of winning control of the SPA. Dues collections were disrupted in Jan. 1920 due to massive and coordinated government raids and do not reflect the actual size of the party membership. These figures were derived from various internal party documents preserved in the archive of the Communist International in Moscow.

The "old CPA" merged with the UCP in May of 1921 to form what I call the "unified CPA" on the basis of a "definite proof of paid membership" of 6,560.

The CLP was the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party loyal to the newly-elected National Executive Committee headed by Alfred Wagenknecht. This group consisted to a relatively large extent of non-Federation members, with particular strength coming from the state of Ohio and various state parties of the Western United States. The group sought to win control of the 1919 Emergency National Convention and left to establish their own organization when defeated on the floor of that body.

The UCP was the product of the unification of the Communist Labor Party with a breakaway faction of the old CPA featuring prominently Charles Ruthenberg, Isaac Ferguson, and other non-Language Federation members.

MAY 1921 ----- 5,927

The UCP merged with the "old CPA" to form the "unified CPA" on the basis of a "definite proof of paid membership" of 5,927.

The "unified CPA" was a new organization born of the coerced union of the UCP and the old CPA. The group was governed by a Central Executive Committee consisting of five members of each of the two constituent organizations. After a short period of time, two of the former members of the "old CPA" began voting with the five former members of the UCP as a bloc, a situation which resulted in a new split by the so-called "Central Caucus" faction late in November of 1921.

"As of Dec. 31, 1921" ----- 5,796
1922-Q2 (April-June ave.) ----- 4,288
1922-Q3 (July-Sept. ave.) ----- 2,351
1922-Q4 (Oct.-Nov. only) ----- 4,260

[fn: Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 146. Dec. 31, 1921 figure on l. 1. 1922-Q2 figure calculated from l. 3. 1922-Q3 calculated from l. 4, major NY District Estonian Federation error adjusted (net -99 members). 1922 Q-4 figures an average of d. 146, ll. 5-6, missing returns from certain districts (actual number significantly higher).]

The WPA was an open organization formed in the last days of December 1921 in a merger of the bulk of the unified CPA and various individuals and left-wing groups associated with the Socialist Party of America. The WPA began as a secondary organization controlled by the underground party before eventually replacing that organization. The 1925 figure below is for the first 6 months of that year only.

1922 pre Bridgman ----- 8,339
1922 post Bridgman ----- 12,456
 (Nov. = 14, 519; Dec. = 12,866)
1922 official ave. ----- 12, 058
1923 ----- 15,395
1924 ----- 17,389
1925 ----- 16,325

By Language Federations, these numbers were apportioned as follows:

Federation ----- 1922 ----- 1923 -----
1924 ----- 1925

English ----- 1,269----- 1,169-----
--- 1,906----- 2,282

Armenian ----- xxx----- 59-----
----- 61----- 132

Czechoslovak ----- 169----- 431
----- 353----- 295

Estonian ----- 42----- 73-----
----- 73----- 70

Finnish ----- 5,846----- 6,583-----

----- 7,099----- 6,410

German ----- 463----- 461-----
----- 442----- 350

Greek ----- 83----- 142-----
----- 203----- 256

Hungarian ----- 313----- 374-----
----- 469----- 509

Italian ----- 138----- 412-----
----- 581----- 331

Jewish ----- 975----- 1,055-----
----- 1,368----- 1,447

Latvian ----- 397----- 417-----
----- 443----- 434

Lithuanian ----- 677----- 929-----
----- 901----- 815

Polish ----- 110----- 210-----
----- 165----- 121

Russian ----- 379----- 959-----
----- 941----- 870

Scandinavian ----- 33----- 259-----
248----- 211

South Slavic ----- 1,077----- 1,158-----
1,290----- 1,109

Slovenian ----- xxx----- xxx-----
xxx----- 14

Ukrainian ----- 87----- 623-----
----- 781----- 622

[fn: Solon DeLeon and Nathan Fine (eds.), *The American Labor Year Book, 1926*. (NY: Rand School of Social Science, 1926), pg. 247. 1922 pre- and post-Bridgman numbers from official statistics in the Comintern archive, using 4 month averages of average stamps sold. See f. 515, op. 1, d. 146, l. 194 and f. 515, op. 1, d. 147, l. 87. Arithmetic errors in both documents corrected here.]

The "Central Caucus" was organized by the three suspended members of the CEC of the unified CPA -- Charles Dirba, John Ballam, and George Ashkenudzie. The group had strong support amongst various Language Federation groups in the east -- coming chiefly from the Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian and Polish Federations. The group sought to preserve the underground nature of the party against what was viewed as a suicidal opening and to preserve the independent existence of the affiliated Language Federations in the face of their emasculation. The name of the official organization of the Central Caucus faction was also "Communist Party of America, Section of the Communist International," as was the case for the "regular" party.

A June 27, 1922 assessment of the total membership of the Central Caucus faction by John Ballam -- a former leader of the group who rejoined the regular CPA after receiving instructions from the ECCI -- pegged the group's total membership in the ballpark of 4,200 (of whom about 1,250 were estimated to have rejoined the CPA by the June 25, 1922, deadline set by the CI.

[fn. Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 94, l. 51.]